

9 Tips For Creating Ads That Sell

Helping your clients get a better response through proven ad layouts.

Advertising is part art and part science which means that sometimes there are grey areas. However when it comes to ad layout the rules are black and white. These nine tips of effective ad design are based on decades of focus group testing and are proven ways to increase response. They WILL increase the effectiveness your client's advertising, GUARANTEED.

1 - A Great Headline, The Most Important Element!

Newspaper readers scan headlines to decide if a story or ad is of interest to them. That's why creating a great headline is the most important factor in the success of your client's ad (70% of the success of the ad depends on the headline). Take the time to find the perfect headline.

Readers care about one thing more than anything else: what's in it for them! That's why need/benefit headlines are so common and effective. Also, the best headlines are often short (eight words or less), lower case, and in an easy to read font. Subheads are great way to amplify or clarify the headline.

"If your headline does not include a selling message, you may be wasting 80% of your dollars. David Ogilvy"

2 - Dominant Visuals

Every ad should have a dominant visual that takes up at least half of the total space. The best visuals are ones that work with the headline (the headline visual match). Visuals of the product or service being enjoyed by the user are better than showing the product on its own. Keep the image simple. Readers expect a caption under an illustration. This is a great place to add a benefit.

Studies have shown that an ad with an illustration that takes up 50% or more of the ad space increases readership by as much as 37%. (NAA)

3 - White Space

White space helps an ad stand out by putting the focus on the text and illustration making an ad attractive and readable.

4 - Persuasive Copy

Body copy in an ad is read by about 5% of people... a small amount so it's not important....wrong. Those 5% are the qualified buyers. They've seen the offer and the illustration, now they're reading the copy because they're interested. Great copy will expand on the benefits offered in the headline. Write the benefits in the body copy as though you were making friendly conversation. Write short and brief, and continue to tell them what's in it for them. This is where you close them.

5 - Clean Layout

The layout should carry the reader's eye through the message easily and in proper sequence: from headline to illustration to explanatory copy to price to the store name. Avoid overuse of typefaces, overly decorative borders, multiple borders, large areas of reverse and reversed small-point type. These devices are distracting will reduce the number of readers who receive the entire advertising message. The "Z" pattern is a common layout style to move the reader through the message.

6 - Call To Action

So you've got their attention with the illustration, headline and copy now you've got to close the sale. Offer multiple ways to respond to the ad, and most importantly, attach an urgent reason to respond.

7 - Effective Use Of Signature

The signature is the name of the advertiser in any form (may be a logo) and all contact information required for a reader to take action on the ad. The signature should not overshadow other important aspects of the ad. From a design standpoint—other than the logo—the signature is the least important part of the ad. Don't worry about a small phone number or address, if readers are interested, they will find it. Put the signature at the bottom in a readable sized font, nothing larger.

8 - Simple Border

The border should compliment the look that you are developing in the ad but never be the most prominent part of your ad. It should also separate the ad from the surrounding type.

9 - Price

An important (and often dominant) element in most local advertising, people expect and want to see the price. In fact, many local advertisers build their ads around price. The price can be the central feature around which the ad is built, it may precede the copy or it may be used in the text space.